

Oakland Army Base, Post Headquarters Building  
(Administration Building) Building No. 1)  
Alaska Street at Africa Street  
Oakland  
Alameda County  
California

HAER No. CA-125-B

HAER  
CAL  
1-OAK,  
12B-

## PHOTOGRAPHS

## WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107

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**HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD**  
**OAKLAND ARMY BASE, POST HEADQUARTERS BUILDING**  
(Administration Building, Building No. 1)

HAER No. CA-125-B

**Location:** Alaska Street at Africa Street  
USGS Oakland West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: Northing 4184900, Easting 560150

**Date of Construction:** February 1942

**Architect:** Bechtel-McCone-Parsons Corporation, Architect-Engineers, San Francisco, California.

**Contractor:** The prime contractor for this building was The Army Port Contractors, a joint venture of MacDonald & Kahn, Inc.; The Utah Construction Company; and W.A. Bechtel and Bechtel-McCone-Parsons Corporation. At least initially, some 600 black troops of the 394th Quartermaster Battalion helped in construction of the Installation. Additional subcontractors and suppliers consisted primarily of businesses in the San Francisco Bay area.

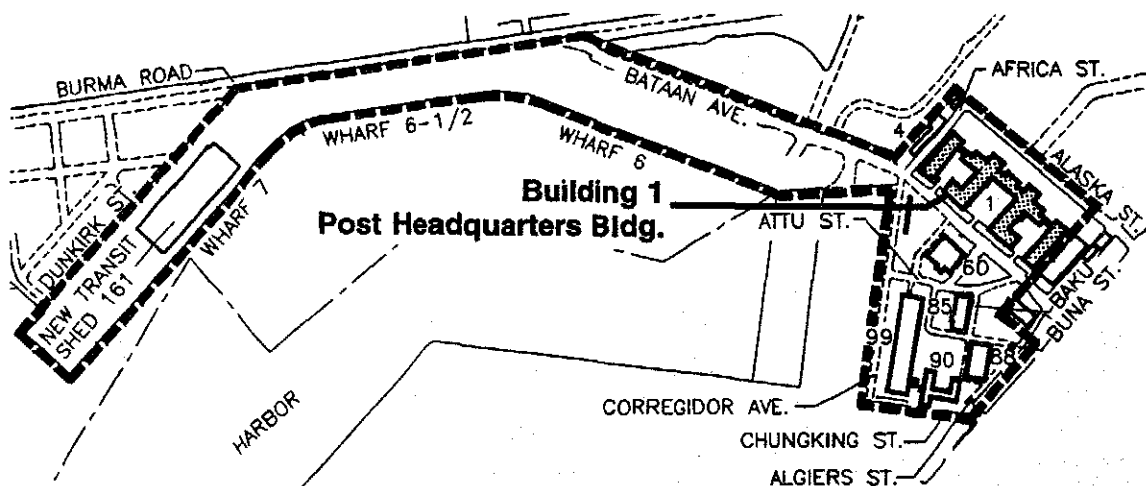
**Present Owner and Occupant:** Military Traffic Management Command, Western Area  
Oakland Army Base, CA 94626-5000

**Original Use:** Administration Building

**Present Use:** Post Headquarters Building

**Significance:** Building 1 has served as the central administration building and headquarters for the Installation since 1942.

**Original Plans:** Original plans were located in the OARB Engineering Office. According to the Real Property Record, the full set of As-Built's consisted of 98 drawings.



**Alterations:** The interior and exterior of the building have changed substantially over time due to periodic renovation.

## I. GENERAL STATEMENT

**Architectural Character.** The Post Headquarters is typical of many other large administrative buildings of the period.

**Condition of Fabric.** Building 1 is generally in good overall condition.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERIOR

**Overall Dimensions.** Building 1 is a 161,983 GSF, two-story, wood-framed, stucco building composed of four wings, a central unit and two arcades arranged in rectangular form 646 feet wide and 260 feet deep. The long (front) side faces northeast, fronting on the parking and parade ground (*Photographs CA-125-B-1 and CA-125-B-2*). Three courtyards are presently used for parking on the south side (*Photographs CA-125-B-7, B-8 and B-9*). The As-Built drawings reproduced as a supplement to this survey show the configuration of the building in detail.

**Foundations.** The building is founded on creosoted/green timber composite wood piles driven into loose fill soil in roughly 20' x 20' bays.

**Walls.** Exterior walls are stucco on wood studs and diagonal board sheathing. Horizontal bands the height of the windows are painted on the walls. Apparently the building has at sometime been restuccoed as these bands are shown on the original plans with a horizontal combed texture. All surfaces are now smooth stucco. Exterior walls form parapets around the building perimeter. Wood framed stucco skirts are hung from the first floor girders to screen the crawl space under the building.

**Structural System.** The primary structure of the building is wood post and beam. Heavy wood girders run 20' on center the length of each wing, and support wood joists, diagonal board rough flooring and wood finish flooring. Second floor joists frame the first floor ceiling and wood joists braced from the roof joists frame the second floor ceiling. Wood joists and diagonal board sheathing support the built-up bituminous roofing. The roof deck is sloped only for drainage and screened from ground level by the parapet walls. The central unit portion of the building varies from the remainder of the building in that the first floor is a poured concrete slab supported on concrete beams and grade beams resting on the typical piles.

**Porches, Stoops, Balconies.** There are no porches or balconies attached to Building 1. However, because the finished floor level of the building is raised significantly above finished grade, there are numerous above grade entrances requiring steps and landings. Over time, soil subsidence has necessitated the addition of risers to existing exterior stairs to compensate for the settlement. All of the stairways and loading docks have been radically modified since the original construction. Also, wood decks and a personnel elevator have been added to the exterior of the building. The north side has three entrances: a primary entrance in the center unit (*Photograph CA-125-B-3*), and identical secondary entrances into each of the two arcades (*Photograph CA-125-B-4*). The east and west faces have no entrances (*Photographs CA-125-B-5 and B-6*). A number of entrances are provided in each of the south side courtyards. All stairs are concrete

with concrete endwalls. The main entrance is accessed via a grand stairway flanked by semicircular shrub planters on each side. One loading dock exists on the south side of the center unit. To conform with current state and federal barrier free design regulations, a handicap ramp has been added to the main entrance.

**Chimneys.** Other than metal boiler and incinerator, none.

**Openings.** Originally, all windows in the building were standard wood sash with clear glass. Lavatory windows were glazed obscure glass. All windows have been replaced with standard aluminum casement and outward opening projected windows (*Photograph CA-125-G-3*). Stationary casement type windows originally used in the center unit's north side have also been replaced. All exterior double doors — metal trim with polished glass inserts and bronze push bars — have been replaced with contemporary metal framed glass doors (*Photograph CA-125-B-11*).

**Roof.** The building is covered by built-up bituminous roofing. The pitch varies, but is approximately .15 in 12.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR

**Floor Plans.** Generally, the building is arranged in wings with double-loaded corridors serving offices on each side. Office spaces are subdivided by wood-framed, ceiling height, plaster partitions. These spaces have been further subdivided by contemporary relocatable partitions.

**Stairways.** Stairways are provided throughout the building, being typically located at the south end of each wing, and at the intersection of each wing and arcade. Generally, stairs are wood with linoleum-covered treads. Rails and balusters are capped with mahogany. The main entrance lobby (*Photograph CA-125-B-10*) is still much the same as when originally constructed.

**Flooring.** The original flooring is 1" wood on the diagonal wood sub-flooring. Resilient flooring has been added on public area floors and stairs throughout the building. Offices, for the most part, are wall-to-wall carpeted.

**Wall and Ceiling Finishes.** Walls are gypsum wallboard, plastered and painted. Typical rooms had a painted wainscot and chair rail, many of which have been removed. Ceilings, for the most part, are low density fiberboard.

**Openings.** Two basic types of doors, each with a number of variations, were used throughout the interior of Building 1. Doors into individual rooms and offices were hollow core doors with birch wood veneer. Double doorways that closed off corridors were generally Kalamein panels with clear glass. Nearly all interior doors have been replaced with contemporary hollow core wood models. Metal clad, fusible link fire doors are included throughout the building.

**Decorative Features and Trims.** A 3' high painted wainscot was originally installed along hallways and stairs. These have mostly disappeared. On the pediment over the main entrance into the building was the word "ADMINISTRATION" executed in metal (possibly brass) letters. These were eventually replaced with "U. S. ARMY" and "OAKLAND ARMY BASE" in two lines. Canopies were provided over each entrance

into the building. These consisted of metal facings over suspended decking. Canopies extended either 3 feet or 6 feet out from the face of the building and included soffit lighting. The canopies still exist over the front and rear main entrances.

**Hardware.** No notable hardware is apparent in the Headquarters Building.

**Mechanical Equipment.** This building is heated with steam radiators, and has a 400 gallon per hour gas fired hot water heater. The majority of overhead lighting consisted of incandescent fixtures ranging from 100 watts to 750 watts. Most lighting has been changed to fluorescent-type ceiling fixtures. Four freight elevators, one at each intersection of a wing and arcade, were provided. There is also one freight lift in the Mail Room, as well as the previously mentioned personnel elevator installed in recent times. Building 1 is equipped with two boiler rooms and one electrical/mechanical room.

**Original Furnishings.** None.

#### IV. SITE

**General Setting and Orientation.** The main entrance is situated on the north side of the center unit facing Alaska Street. Parking for employees and visitors is provided in a large asphalt parking area to the north. Reserved parking is available in the three courtyards formed by the building's wings.

**Historic Landscaping Design.** None noted. All landscaping around Building 1 is contemporary, consisting primarily of lawns and ornamental tree and shrub plantings. An artillery piece of World War II vintage is positioned in a small curbed median at the intersection of Wake Avenue and Alaska Street. An 18th century anchor, flanked by two brass cannons, occupies a position of honor near the flagpole at the building's main entrance.

**Outbuildings.** None.

#### V. SOURCES

**Architectural Drawings.** The Index Sheet for Building 1 indicates that there were 98 pages of architectural drawings for this structure. The drawings are numbered as follows: 7052-106.1 through 7052-106.36; 7052-106.41 through 7052-106.62; 7052-106.66 through 7052-106.78; 7052-106.81 through 7052-106.93; 7052-106.110 through 7052-106.111; 7052-106.113; 7052-106.116 through 7052-106.120; 7052-106.123 through 7052-106.127; and 7052-106.129. The gaps in the numbering system are intentional. All but four sheets were accounted for: 7052-106.4; 7052-106.91; 7052-106.111; and 7052-106.127. The remainder were located at the OARB Engineering Office. Eleven drawings have been reproduced and are included as a supplement to this survey.

**Early Views.** The contractor's "Completion Report" includes a photograph of the completed structure, dated January 28, 1942 (*Photograph CA-125-7*).